

## **Floor Craft Tips & Notes for Tuesdays in Ventura** – Stephen Bauer, [QuantumTango.net](http://QuantumTango.net)

As the **Tuesday Night Tango** scene in Ventura becomes more popular and more widely known, it is likely we will continue to draw ever more dancers to **Grapes & Hops** – both newer faces and more experienced *tangueros* alike.

It is always wonderful when more dancers come and enjoy tango ... but unfortunately the restaurant and the lovely area where we dance will not be getting bigger any time soon. So in order to maximize the enjoyment for everyone, it helps when we all work together to make the best use of our shared and limited space.

Below, a few guidelines and suggestions that are widely used by other tango communities when facing similar challenges: How best to manage a bigger crowd on a smaller dance floor:

- **Keep it simple** – a closer embrace and smaller shapes/sequences/figures work best on crowded dance floors when space is at a premium – if you don't know how, ask a teacher or a more experienced dancer for suggestions – or stick to basic/musical walking and your most contained & accessible turns ... If you aren't able to keep it small, then it's best to wait until the floor is less crowded to begin using longer/bigger movements, practicing your latest moves from class, and/or trying more complex sequences, *salidas*, or other ideas that take up a lot of space.
- **Maintain a good flow** – respect and stay with the *ronda* or "Line of Dance" – the counter-clockwise flow that moves around the room. And keep in mind that this "Line of Dance" is a path around the outside edge of the dance floor. Therefore, in order to maximize everyone's space, be sure to dance all the way into the corners.
- **Keep moving** – close gaps in front to avoid jams behind, and don't linger in one spot if you have room to move ahead. Likewise, don't tailgate or crowd the couple in front of you. Like driving on a freeway, a good choice is to "split the difference" between you and the neighboring couples in front and behind you in the "Line of Dance."
- **Stay in your lane** – Grapes & Hops is narrow, so avoid dancing in the middle, and don't cross the "center line."
- **Look before you merge** – if the song has already begun, look for an open space in the "Line of Dance," then try to make eye contact with – and get acknowledgement from – the oncoming leader before joining the *ronda*.
- **Avoid passing** – or at least keep it to a bare minimum. If you must pass a slow couple, use caution and be mindful of the "blind spot" on the closed side of the slower couple's embrace – they may not know you're there ...
- **Avoid zig-zagging** – wandering about, dancing randomly into any available "open space," and/or cutting across the middle of the dance floor are considered disrespectful and disruptive on a crowded floor – the telltale mark of a careless, unaware, or unskilled dancer. The very best *tangueros* will "show off" by dancing on a dime ...
- **Dance with your "neighbors"** (and the larger "room") – not just with your partner, feelings & the music. Tango is not a solo or selfish activity ... it's a communal art form that's co-created by everyone present and sharing the floor.
- **Make choices that are appropriate to the prevailing conditions** – including depth of embrace, when to move, which movements to use, and the size of your steps. In a crowd, a skilled and courteous dancer always takes on the opportunity and responsibility to adjust and fit their dance to the room ... not the other way around.
- **If you or your partner collide** with another couple – leaders check that their partners are unhurt, and both leaders apologize to the other couple for the collision. If you collide more than *once an hour*, adjust your dancing!
- **Consider offering some feedback** to your partner – since Tuesdays at Grapes & Hops are a *práctica*/milonga mix, we can always share our thoughts & suggestions with each other to help improve our dancing. If a leader insists on inappropriate big movements, dances in the middle of the room, or jams or crashes into others, then the person best able to give immediate feedback is his/her follower ... if the situation continues, one possibility is to politely decline to dance with that leader until they are willing to update their dancing and/or adjust their choices.
- **Keep to the edges** of the room if you're sitting one out, chatting with friends, and/or just watching the action on the dance floor – dancers have the "right of way." And avoid crossing the dance floor during a *tanda* ... always best to go around the outside ... or wait until the end of a song in order to shift to another part of the room.
- **Push your chair back** under its table before you begin dancing – don't leave an empty chair sticking out halfway onto the dance floor where it can create an unnecessary obstacle.
- **Always aim to set a good example** – for your partners, fellow dancers, onlookers, visitors, and newcomers.